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NATIONAL MONUMENTS

Trump order to aim first at Bears Ears

Corbin Hiar, E&E News reporter

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President Trump tomorrow will sign an executive order calling for a review of the Antiquities Act and dozens of national monuments that were created by his predecessors in the past two decades, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said tonight at a White House briefing.

The review, to be led by Zinke, will span from the 878,000-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument established in southern Utah by President Clinton in 1996 to the 1.35 million-acre Bears Ears National Monument created by President Obama over the opposition of the Beehive State's congressional delegation late last year.

Ultimately the secretary may urge the president to rescind, resize or modify the

management of around 30 national monuments, Zinke said, all of them larger than 100,000 acres.

The lands and waters under review total tens of millions of acres, he noted. He will also recommend legislative changes to the century-old Antiquities Act.

The first step is to provide Trump with an interim report in 45 days focused on Bears Ears. Then a final report — based on discussions with members of Congress, local lawmakers and other stakeholders — is due within 120 days, Zinke told reporters. That document will contain recommendations for how the president should deal with the other monuments included in the review.

Zinke acknowledged it remains unclear whether the administration has the legal authority to rescind monuments. "I'm not scared of getting sued," he said.

The executive order will restore "the trust between local communities and Washington," Zinke said. It also will put "America and the Department of the Interior back on track to manage our federal lands in accordance with traditional multiple use," he added.

Zinke also reiterated his opposition to transferring federal lands and denied claims that the lands under review will end up open to drilling.

But ahead of Zinke's briefing, conservation advocates panned the Trump administration's planned review of monuments as a secretive effort to all but turn over currently protected lands to the fossil fuel industry and other interests.

"While the details are still emerging, it is clear that these reviews are a thinly veiled attempt to appease industry and sell off our national parks, public lands, oceans and cultural heritage to the highest bidder," said Christy Goldfuss, the Center for American Progress Action Fund's vice president for energy and environment policy.

Goldfuss, a veteran of the Obama White House, spoke as part of a press conference along with Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), Ute Indian Tribe Business Committee Chairman Shaun Chapoose and others.

Reporter Jennifer Yachnin contributed.

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